

## **“PROTOCOL FOR HANDING SURPLUS STAFF SITUATIONS”**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **1. How will the new Protocol protect members facing redundancy?**

This new Protocol is the first formal agreement with the unions which binds Departments/agencies/related bodies to steps they will have to take with the aim of avoiding compulsory redundancy.

Any member who is declared surplus but wishes to continue to work in the civil service or related areas should be made at least one offer of alternative employment.

The Protocol is explicit on the requirement for surplus staff being given priority and exclusive consideration for vacancies elsewhere in the civil service.

There is also now a direct requirement for equality impact assessments to be carried out before issuing notices.

In the event of departments moving to issue notices the unions and Cabinet Office will be notified at least 2 weeks in advance and before Ministers are consulted.

The union, both departmentally and nationally, now have a clear role throughout the process.

#### **2. Does this new protocol cover members who work outside of the core government departments?**

Yes. There is now a clear understanding with Cabinet Office that the Protocol applies to the civil service and NDPBs in receipt of HR Bulletin and where PCS has a membership.

#### **3. Does the new agreement mean we have a guarantee of no compulsory redundancy?**

No. This is not an absolute, unconditional guarantee of no compulsory redundancies, although it is our belief that the agreement will effectively make them extremely unlikely. But, because we have not been given a guarantee, the National Executive Committee has said that the union will reserve the right to take industrial action to protect members if any notices arise after the procedures within the Protocol have been exhausted. The NEC will immediately reconvene in this event.

#### **4. What does the agreement mean for our national campaign to protect jobs and conditions?**

The key demands of our campaign are for:

- Guarantees of no compulsory redundancies or relocations
- Pay increases which at least keep pace with inflation
- Fair and equal national pay
- No more outsourcing without negotiations and agreement
- No cuts in the civil service compensation scheme
- Adequate resources and decent working conditions

While the new Agreement is a significant step in protecting members' jobs, and in dealing with privatisation and outsourcing (see separate FAQ), the dispute continues over our outstanding demands, particularly in relation to pay. We all still need to continue our principled opposition to office closures, contracting-out, and other unacceptable features of the government's continuing so-called 'efficiency programme.'

#### **5. What is happening on pay?**

Our national campaign has resulted in the first national negotiations on pay for 15 years. These talks are focusing on moving towards more coherent pay arrangements. For example, groups of jobs that could have pay rates comparable between departments have been discussed, and re-establishing national bargaining on standard civil service conditions, such as hours and holidays has moved closer.

#### **6. Will national talks over pay resolve low pay rises?**

Current national talks will not resolve the problems of low settlements flowing from the government public sector pay policy. At present several individual departments are in dispute over 2007 pay offers. The NEC has agreed that the 2008 Treasury Pay Remit Guidance is unacceptable and should be opposed.

A national lobby of parliament was held on 11 March which was attended by 300 PCS members. Over 100 MPs were directly lobbied with many being sympathetic.

We have now submitted a national pay claim for 2008. This makes a series of national demands including a minimum rate of £8 per hour (£17,539 p.a.) and an across the board increase of at least 6% in addition to any progression or increments.

The NEC has called on all Groups in dispute over pay to consider strike action on April 24 alongside the education unions.

**7. My pay offer has been imposed; does this mean I am no longer part of the dispute?**

As your pay offer has been imposed by your employer rather than being accepted by your union this means you are still in dispute.

**8. What is happening regarding the issues of adequate resources and decent working conditions?**

The national talks in the 'well being at work' strand continue. These talks encompass sickness absence management, equality, working conditions and sustainability.

**9. What is the latest on the civil service compensation scheme?**

The situation remains that no formal proposals have yet been received from the employer in relation to the so-called 'reform' of CSCS. We remain vigilant on this issue and must be ready to respond quickly and effectively to any proposals for change which will be detrimental to the interests of our members.

**10. I have had enough of working in civil/public services and I would like to move on. I would rather PCS concentrated on negotiating good packages for people like me to escape.**

While PCS negotiators will endeavor to reach the best possible redundancy packages within the rules of the civil service compensation scheme for those that want to leave, it is important to remember that many departments lack the budget to cover huge redundancy payments. Where there are redundancies, the employer may pick and choose who goes according to skills, costs and any number of other factors. Also, although natural wastage can account for some job cuts, all that means is increased work for others. Not everyone will be lucky enough to find work elsewhere or be able to uproot themselves and move to new jobs. And even if you want to go, your employer might not let you!